



Hampton Beach Area Commission

Meeting Minutes, October 26, 2006 Hampton Police Station Conference Room

In Attendance:

Fred Rice, Chairman – Town of Hampton
Doug DePorter – Vice Chairman, NH Dept. of Transportation
Brian Warburton, Secretary/Treasurer, DRED (Seacoast Parks/Rec)
Todd Loiseau – Town of Hampton
John Kane – Hampton Beach Village District
Tom McGuirk – Hampton Beach Village District
Chuck Rage – Hampton Chamber of Commerce
Fran McMahon – Rockingham Planning Commission
Carol Barleon – Office of Energy and Planning

Administrative

Jamie Steffen – Hampton Town Planner
Judy Santarelli – Seacoast Parks and Recreation

Chairman Rice opened the meeting just after 7 pm. The minutes of the September 28 meeting were amended as follows:

Pg. 4, Linda Gebhart's name was misspelled,
Pg. 6, John Kane had stated that he is opposed to FAR4 as a category,
Pg. 8 The correct title for the proposed museum is Earth, Sea and Space Center.
Pg. 9, Tom McGuirk corrected his message; Carol Barleon stated she had suggested that we work with the committee to develop a grant to look at signage.
Pg. 10 Brian Warburton had clarified that some work has been done on North Beach in the 6th street area, but it is only partially done.

Chairman Rice asked the members if they had any general comments. John Kane asked what exactly can be done or put in at the State Park. Chairman Rice responded that the Land and Water Conservation Fund prohibits private development on parkland, unless there is comparable land to swap. Brian Warburton added that there are numerous agencies that must be gone through before any plan can be implemented. Chairman Rice concluded by saying that at the present time, the only concept being considered is the Earth, Sea and Space Center.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: Subcommittee Chairman Tom McGuirk raised the issue of the unattractiveness of much of the seasonal businesses signage at Hampton Beach. He pointed out that the Building Inspector does not have the manpower to police signage issues during the peak summer season when the violations are the greatest. John Kane said that the requirement that anyone with a complaint must sign their name to a form intimidates many people. Chairman Rice said that complaints could be brought to either the Building Inspector or the Board of Selectmen. Tom McGuirk responded that the Building Inspector may have enough manpower once the building season slows down. In the meantime he feels it's important to determine what kind of signs should be permitted. He cautioned the need to control what is happening with signage so that, as new regulations are adopted, they can have some impact rather than having too many people grandfathered in. Chairman Rice suggested a letter to the Board of Selectmen stating, in effect, "The following signs appear to be out of order, we understand the Building Inspector is overburdened. We hope you will find the means to enforce these. These signs are out of compliance."

Tom McGuirk said that he had contacted Shannon Alther, who works for TMS, an architectural firm out of Portsmouth. Mr. Alther had previously assisted Skip Windemiller on the creation of the design guidelines booklet. After their meeting, Mr. McGuirk will update the current subcommittee members. Chairman Rice reminded members that last year the Commission voted to allow the subcommittee to make and approve design recommendations to developers without coming back to the Commission. Tom McGuirk said that a subcommittee meeting would be set after his meeting with Mr. Alther.

BEACHSCAPE: Planting of trees: Subcommittee Chairmaan John Kane announced that dwarf trees had been planted by employees of the State Urban Forestry Dept. and by members of the Committee. The dwarf trees were chosen because in some locations they are close to buildings and the smaller size was advantageous. The Precinct had paid for all of the trees and the Town had helped with the earthwork and grates. Mr. Kane pointed out that additional trees had been planted at the foot of A St., and in front of the Ashworth hotel. The large triangle of land at the Route 101 entrance to the beach is being considered for rototilling and the planting of wild flowers. Chairman Rice pointed out the planting located near the Q-A building along Rte. 101 as an example of what can be done with wild flowers. Doug DePorter suggested leaving a margin of grass around the triangle, rather than planting to the edge of the pavement.

Lighting: John Kane said that although people are eager to assist with new lighting at the beach, when they hear the cost involved, they are apt to back off. There are 244 light poles on Hampton Beach. Each of the new poles would have a base, an arm, a cover and globe. The ballpark figure per light pole is \$3,000 uninstalled. John Kane discussed the need to float a bond and said that he feels it is most practical if all are done at once. Because of the large expense involved, John said that this is an item that will need to go before the Precinct voters. He added the need for a committee and further study. Mr.

Kane said that he had spoken to a company that has installed 80% of the poles in Boston, MA. He pointed out that the light poles on Church St. and Highland Ave. would not be permitted now, because the globes there are illegal. There must be a shade above the light to prevent light pollution. He said that the lights must now shine down and to the right and left, and not onto property to the rear. Most lights shoot out about 25 ft., so the poles are generally set 50 ft. apart. Mr. Kane recommends eliminating lights from the locations around the Royal Hampton and Surf Hotel, as well as by the Lady of the Sea Statue. There are areas that sit on ledge, and it would be very expensive to blast the ledge just for lights. He added that he hopes to talk to Tim Noonan, Vice President of Community Affairs for Unitil, to see if they would assist the town on the lighting project. Chairman Rice agreed that Unitil is very responsive to community needs. John Kane stated that he plans to bring the lighting issue to the Precinct voters, then do a study and put it out to bid. He spoke about the current bond that they are trying to whittle down. Brian Warburton emphasized the amount of work involved in procuring a bond.

Fran McMahon spoke about the bare plywood look which typifies the store fronts in winter. John Kane called this an eyesore and stated the need establish some zoning regulations to correct the problem. There was agreement that these storefronts make the buildings look abandoned. John Kane questioned how to motivate the property owners to improve the look of their properties. Chairman Rice stated that the Chamber of Commerce is the body that has the most leverage with business owners, and feels that the Chamber could exercise some influence. Todd Loiseau suggested that interested Commission members could take it upon themselves to contact everyone in a 3 block area and approach each business owner directly. Chairman Rice said that if 80% of the front of the beach were responsive it could make a very favorable impression. John Kane asked if a monetary incentive might be effective. Todd Loiseau responded by saying he did not think the money was necessary. He felt taking time to talk personally with the business owners would have impact. Chairman Rice asked Todd Loiseau and John Kane to explore this topic further.

Chairman Rice then asked if there had been any progress towards the thought of a theme or design for beach signs. John Kane responded that little steps are being taken. Chairman Rice told the group that he had seen Mrs. Gebhart working in the flower bed next to the fire station, and he wished to compliment the group that is maintaining the beds. He credited the Beachscape Committee with carrying forward the visible signs of the Commission. He reminded the Beachscape group that since they represent a volunteer group under the Beach Precinct, they are the sole part of this Commission that can actually implement directly the Commission's recommendations.

ZONING AND REDEVELOPMENT: Subcommittee Chairman Fran McMahon reported that the subcommittee had met to review the zoning recommendations in the master plan as well as those in the zoning report. Jamie Steffen distributed a handout entitled Re-zoning Proposal for the Beach Area of Hampton, NH, which contained the conclusions of the committee. Both the Committee and the Planning Board are having difficulty getting their arms around the details of the FAR Ratio concept, and had

concluded that the FAR concept should be done away with in order to eliminate confusion, and to instead use a more understandable zoning plan.

Jamie Steffen described a proposal to replace the current Business-Seasonal zoning with a set of newly designated zoning districts. The first such zone would be called “Beach Resort,” and would extend from the Ashworth Hotel to F St. between Ocean Blvd and Ashworth Ave. This area would allow for the greatest building height in order to establish anchor attractions. A front setback would incorporate some public space. Discussion on side and rear setbacks, including the idea of incorporating stepback elevations, is continuing. Discussion has taken place about the architectural review process in this zone, as well as tonier signage and what to do about parking needs. The thought is that lighting standards here should mirror the Ashworth Avenue infrastructure improvements.

The second distinct zone would be called “Beach Commercial” and would include the lots fronting on the west side of Ocean Blvd and both sides of Ashworth Ave. from F St. to the southern intersection of Ashworth and Ocean. Chairman Rice added that the Island Area which is now Residence B would be zoned “Beach Residence A,” and the remaining property along the lettered streets and west of Ashworth would be designated “Beach Residence B.” State property which was previously zoned General would be designated as State property. He emphasized the desire to protect the residential character of the Island area. Fran McMahon emphasized that Beach Residence A and Beach Residence B areas do not meet the same standards as Residence A and Residence B in other parts of town.

Mr. McMahon mentioned the smaller Beach Commercial zone at North Beach, at the intersection of High St. and Ocean Boulevard. He said the committee is looking at what can be done within those zones, but not expanding them. Fran McMahon stated the need for a comprehensive parking study.

Chairman Rice said that he had spoken to Dan Gray of CEDC and left a message with Marie Capello of REDC regarding sources and funding for a comprehensive parking study. Chairman Rice explained that each constituent group looks at the parking situation from their own perspective, which makes it difficult to reach a consensus. He believes a traffic expert firm needs to look at the Hampton Beach parking situation objectively, taking into account all points of view. He reminded the group that this Commission is supposed to remain neutral. Chairman Rice reported Dan Gray would speak with Marie and together they will look for a source for funding. They will do some searching, and perhaps try to get some sponsorship from a company. Chairman Rice hopes to have something preliminary by next meeting.

Fran McMahon moved that the Commission hold a public hearing on Nov. 30th to get input from the public on these concepts. The results will then go from the Beach Commission to the Planning Board, which will hold another public hearing before placing them on the warrant. He emphasized how critical the time is. Carol Barleon seconded the motion. There followed general discussion about dates, times and location

options for the meeting as well as expressions of concern that if the proposed changes are not finalized, they would be more difficult to present to the public.

Chairman Rice noted that the master plan recommends a series of identifiable neighborhoods that should be treated uniquely. He said that one purpose of the public hearing is to define places that have common characteristics. Carol Barleon suggested that the Master Plan could provide a type of introduction for the Nov. 30th meeting. Tom McGuirk emphasized the need to inform the public that there will be additional hearings, with refinements at each stage. Chairman Rice commented that Step 1 is to define the areas and Step 2 is to determine what is wanted in those areas.

Brian Warburton said that the Selectman's Room might be scheduled on Nov. 30th. Tom McGuirk suggested the meeting be held on Nov. 29th, because he said people are used to seeing planning issues on Wednesdays. Fran McMahon moved to hold the public hearing on Nov. 29th. John Kane seconded the motion. Chairman Rice indicated the Selectmen's Meeting Room as the 1st choice for the hearing and the Police Training Room as the 2nd choice. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING: Doug DePorter showed the group a copy of The Department of Transportation's Conference Report on the Bureau of Bridge Designs. Chairman Rice said that he would scan the report and send it out electronically to all of the Commission members. Chairman Rice restated the Commission's previous recommendation for bridge renovations.

Doug DePorter stated that striping pavement markings would need to be done along Ocean Blvd before the resurfacing was started. There was discussion of whether the road should be milled before it is resurfaced. Fran McMahon said that there are many places where the road is higher than the sidewalk. Mr. DePorter suggested that microsurfacing would provide a thinner overlay.

Chuck Rage pointed out that all of the middle lots will need to be torn up because of the need to tie into the sewer. Doug DePorter said that if that is the case, this work would have to be done after the Seafood Festival. Chairman Rice acknowledged that would give Public Works adequate time for planning. John Kane asked if the striping could be done earlier in the season. Brian Warburton said some of the current crosswalks were not redone because their locations may not be legal. He emphasized the importance of the striping and asked if they could be blue to make them more visible. Doug DePorter responded that some towns put on their own color. Chuck Rage pointed out the need for better signage for crosswalks, saying that people now cross everywhere.

STATE PARKS: Brian Warburton said he wished that the Selectmen would call the Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED) or the Department of Transportation (DOT) before speaking on issues. He encouraged them to do their homework as there have been some misstatements. Chairman Rice recommended that the Selectmen should go to John Kane in the Precinct, or DRED, or to the Beach Commission to get accurate, current information on Beach issues.

Mr. Warburton stated that a wrap up meeting for Senate Bill 5 was held on Tuesday, Oct. 24th and that a final report, with recommendations, will be produced By Nov. 30th. He reported on parking revenues, and explained how leases are issued for leased parking spaces, to include the requirement that anyone applying for a lease must be providing overnight lodging. Brian would like the Precinct's help on May 30th 2007 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Marine Memorial. He reported that work on the seawall had begun at Haverhill Ave. and that they expect to finish the new rail up to the Memorial by Thanksgiving. Work will continue in the spring. He added that there will be some nice/colorful signage along the Seawall next season listing beach rules, and there will be more sweeping up and down the boulevard. Brian then spoke of the proposed 10 million dollar complex which would replace the existing Seashell under SB5. He said a bid request to remove the damaged canopies at the Seashell would be issued by December. He informed the Commission that Mike Housman is the new Supervisor of State Parks. Mr Warburton pointed out that the bathrooms at North Beach and the "Swamp" are open year round. He mentioned that there is still discussion of the UNH Marine Lab going into Odiorne, and re-emphasized the need to continue with a year-round philosophy for Hampton Beach. He reported that all of the meters had been taken down and that they will require a lot of work and repairs. There is also ongoing work to repair benches and the picnic area.

Chairman Rice asked if any thought had been given to using the new credit card system for the parking meters. Mr. Warburton confirmed that the idea had been looked into. He then spoke of the need for an additional ATV for the Lifeguards as well as the need for bicycles and scooters. He concluded by addressing the process for special permits and said that as soon as the upcoming season's schedule is clear, it will be made public.

Brian Warburton and John Kane discussed signage for beach rules, including signage to discourage digging large holes in the sand, which can pose a danger to children. Mr. Warburton said he would give the signs to Mr. Kane when they are made. Mr. Kane asked where the seawall repairs would end. Mr. Warburton responded up to where the Jersey barriers are currently placed.

Chairman Rice reminded Commission members to obtain letters from their organizations that indicate support for the concept of the Earth, Sea and Space Center. He went on to say that on April 20th, 2007, John Chatterton, a noted undersea explorer, will give a free presentation at the Ashworth for the benefit of the Center.

Chairman Rice asked members of the Commission if they need copies of the Master Plan or Fay Spofford Report. Six members indicated that they need copies of the Master Plan. Chairman Rice asked Jamie Steffen to obtain copies for them. Carol Barleon asked for an updated list of the Commission members.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.